

Citizen Planners: Mapping the Future of 'the City'

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Introduction

The built environment comes about through a multitude of decisions and actions, some of which are, ostensibly, taken in the public interest. The extent to which any one individual or any particular group feels able to influence those decisions however depends on a wide variety of factors. These include their political, economic, educational and cultural capital, their familiarity with the legislation, policies and language, their ability to engage with officials and increasingly the digital portals that act as 'gatekeepers' to political decision-making processes. Often it may be the least enfranchised, and therefore least able to exercise autonomy and influence, who are most affected by their environment. This paper concerns one such group. It documents the "Mapping the Future" pilot project, which seeks to understand young people's imaginaries and experiences of the built environment. It draws attention to their access to, use of, and ultimately, the degree of influence they can enact over the spaces in which they live.

"Mapping the Future" is the latest in a number of (thematically and methodologically linked) projects undertaken over the previous 8 years by the author and his colleagues (see <https://accidentalyouthclub.wordpress.com/> for more details). These projects have used participatory mapping exercises, interviews and photo-elicitation, with various groups of young people to understand their 'lifeworlds' (or *lebenswelt*; the totality of an individual's lived experiences) in urban settlements across the North East of England, but primarily in the twin cities and conurbations of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead.

This paper draws on Children's Geography, a sub-field of Human Geography, which has emerged in academia following the adoption in 1989 by the United Nations of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*. Research into Children's Geography documents and debates the extent to which children and young people are considered as 'political actors'. Of particular interest to this paper, is the interpretation of the ('small-p' or micro-) political. p/political acts occur spatially, are embodied (or performed) and dialogic (or negotiated). This is in counterpoint to the deliberative ('capital-P' or macro-) Politics. P/politics is defined by participation in abstracted civic institutions – from which children are excluded – and by 'rational' argumentation and policy or decision-making (Elwood & Mitchell, 2012: p.2). Elwood & Mitchell assert children's social actions are p/political because they negotiate and remake social relationships and therefore should be recognised as politically-formative. In common with others (see, for example, Kallio & Häkli, 2013, who qualify the p/political as also requiring 'intentionality') Elwood & Mitchell propose young people's spatial, bodily and

dialogical tactics must be considered politically significant, because these are the only ways in which they are able to exercise agency from a position of relative inequality (ibid: p.4)

Before proceeding, it is worth briefly noting there are a plethora of terms used in Children's Geography – children, young people, youths, teens, adolescents, etc. – as these are, at least partly, geographically situated and socially constructed. Kallio & Häkli (2013: p.6) quote the UN Convention (1989) which defines a child as “every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” While used in this sense when referring to, for example, ‘child soldiers’ or ‘street children’, Kallio & Häkli note the UN definition was hotly debated during the drafting and is applied inconsistently in the Treaty. Elwood & Mitchell (citing Craig Jeffrey, 2010) define children as “all under 15 years of age”. Jeffrey himself describes children as between the ages of 5 and 15, and youths as aged 16 to 30. Collectively he refers to both children and youths as ‘young people’. Manuela Du Bois-Reymond (1998) describes adolescence as occurring between the age of puberty and the age of majority (typically, 18 years of age). They also describe a period of post-adolescence extending into mid-20s or later in the Global West. Post-adolescence is characterised by elective Higher Education; formative personal relationships; continuing or partial economic dependence and/ or cohabitation or return periods of living with parents. Jeffrey observes this transitional theory – describing a linear progression from childhood dependence to autonomous selfhood – is both socially constructed and, increasingly, frustrated by socio-economic circumstances, such that some people never achieve (their culture's signifiers of) full adulthood, such as financial independence; marriage and children; or house-ownership. The pilot project described in this paper was undertaken with post-adolescents and young adults. Previous projects, also referenced in the paper, were undertaken with school pupils aged between 10 and 18. Therefore, the term ‘young people’ will be used to describe all of the participants.

“The Right to the City”

The slogan, the ‘Right to the City’ (translated from the title of Henri Lefebvre's 1968 book *Le Droit à la Ville*, in Kofman & Lebas, 1996) has been adopted by diverse groups from militant social and environmental campaigners, via anti-globalisation protest movements opposed to supra-national organisations, through the growth of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), to UNESCO and *Habitat III*. The different interpretations and connotations of the slogan employed by these different players are described and critiqued by Margit Mayer (2009). However, we are interested here in Lefebvre's original conception: a ‘Right to the City’ is created *only* through its *enactment*. David Harvey asserts the ‘Right to the City’ is not liberty for an *individual* to access urban resources, but is the right to participate *collectively* in transforming the life of our cities, in shaping them and, in the process, transforming ourselves and our societies (in Mayer, 2009).

Lefebvre's ‘Right’ is a continual (and slow) process of change through competing claims to uses of the city by different groups (Kofman and Lebas, 1996). Thus it is both p/political, as defined by Elwood & Mitchell in relation to Children's agency, as well as (conventionally) of P/politics. Lefebvre's assertion that the city must remain contested space, in effect, is a call and demand for greater inclusivity of different ways of being and ingenuity in the ways we make use of ‘the city’.

Mapping the Future

The “Mapping the Future” project evolved from involvement with *Juice Festival* in 2016 and 2017. *Juice Festival* was targeted at children and young people (aged 0 – 24 years) and occurred during the schools’ October half-term break. It was backed by the NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI), a public-private partnership marketing the twin cities as a tourist destination, up to the beginning of 2018 and the conclusion of three-years’ Arts Council ‘National Portfolio Organisation’ funding. Team Juice were formed under the umbrella of the *Juice Festival* as a group of volunteers, aged 16 to 24, who gained experience and qualifications in arts and events management through curating, facilitating and evaluating the *Juice Festival* and other, youth- and art-focussed events in the region.

Team Juice members already have a high degree of ‘cultural capital’ and personal agency, so the “Mapping the Future” pilot was proposed to them as a form of knowledge exchange: in which they gained first-hand experience of qualitative research techniques and, because they were already familiar and comfortable with workshopping activities, they could offer feedback on the exercises, and were free to suggest their own alternatives to the author’s proposals.

Workshops with Team Juice

Team Juice participated in three workshops. At the first workshop, Participatory Research methods; including mappings, field notes, and audio recordings of semi-structured discussions, were used to gather evidence of the participants’ ‘lifeworlds’. This prompted a group discussion about how they understood and related to ‘the city’; initially as an abstract concept, and then as personal experiences. In the second workshop, the participants were facilitated to analyse the visual materials they had produced previously. The participants’ mappings only represent an interpretation of what was already known to them and what they had experienced, not what was absent and unknown in their built environment and ‘lifeworlds’. In the third workshop, the participants’ analyses prompted them to identify issues affecting their lives and therefore became the basis for considering how they could begin to enact changes to these circumstances.

Ultimately, the “Mapping the Future” project aims to design a toolkit of methods which could facilitate *any* community to identify circumstances affecting their access to, and use(s) of, ‘the[ir] city’; enabling them to develop tactics for exercising their influence over the built environment.

The first workshop was held on the evening of 20 July 2017 at Newcastle City Library with ten participants undertaking mapping activities. They were asked to consider, firstly, “What makes a city a city?” and, secondly, “What makes NewcastleGateshead distinctive?” This workshop produced nineteen mappings, stories, lists and drawings which informed an intensive discussion during the third part of the workshop. The discussion was subsequently transcribed and coded by the author. The coding of the transcript of the discussion of “what makes a city a city?” suggested an even balance of positive, neutral and negative

comments. In the discussion about “what makes Newcastle-Gateshead distinctive?” comments were predominately positive.

The second and third workshops each took place with five participants on the morning and afternoon of Saturday, 10 March 2018. The participants were reacquainted with the nineteen mappings produced in the previous workshop and guided through a process of emergent thematic analysis. In contrast with the coding of the transcripts from the first workshop, detailed below, the mappings were interpreted by the participants as illustrating almost entirely positive attributes of the city.

Workshop 1: What makes a City a City?

Physical attributes +ve	Social attributes +ve
Choices (where to go)	Opportunities (what to do)
Open spaces (make a “good” city)	Diversity and tolerance of different:
Contrasts of :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “industrial” vs. “contemporary” architectural styles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexuality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manifestations of new money and old money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tradition(s) 	
-ve	-ve
Oppressive:	Indifference to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of open spaces and views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty and homelessness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heat island effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic disparity
	Lack of diversity by
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age (older people)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lifestyle (families)

Table 1. What Makes a City a City?

Physical features of “city-ness”

The principle defining characteristic of “city-ness” for the participants was a greater range of choices for leisure and consumption, especially the variety of cuisines, restaurants and food stuffs available. There were also considered to be more opportunities to access education and for commerce.

“Good” cities were defined as having open spaces (e.g. Newcastle, Sheffield). Others were characterised as oppressive. Manchester was cited as an example of an oppressive built environment, due to a lack of open spaces, a sense of the buildings being over-bearing and ‘closing vistas’ thereby making the participants more conscious of a ‘heat island’ effect in summer.

The juxtaposition of buildings of different ages was considered by the participants as a defining characteristic of “city-ness”. For some this was described with reference to architectural styles but, for at least one of the participants there was a conflation of styles and ages with wealth and influence, “you know you are in a city because there’s new money, but also you can tell old money and tradition.”

Social features of “city-ness”

The participants expressed more ambivalence about the social features of “city-ness”, with the same attributes viewed in both positive and negative terms.

Cities were perceived as attracting a diverse demographic, a factor which “fosters communities”. Yet city-living was thought mainly to attract younger people, who were perceived to have different priorities to families and to older, retired people who were thought to be attracted to “living in the countryside”. People in cities were considered to be either, more tolerant and accepting of different ways of looking and living, or possibly were “a bit more desensitised” to differences. On the other hand, segregation between different communities and indifference to others, most explicitly witnessed in the visibility of homelessness, were described as a negative aspects of living in cities.

Whilst the tolerance of social segregation and economic disparity was viewed negatively, tolerance of racial, cultural and sexual diversity was viewed positively by this cohort. It was unclear whether or not the participants thought physical proximity and tolerance, or indifference, would lead to greater interaction and integration with other communities or if something more was required to overcome social separations and, if so, what?

What makes NewcastleGateshead distinctive?

Physical attributes	Social attributes
+ve	+ve
Topography	Scale
Geographical features (Town Moor, River Tyne)	“friendliness”
Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feeling safe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Walkability” 	
-ve	-ve
Lack of ease for pedestrians of river crossings	Drinking culture
	Football tribalism

Table 2. What Makes NewcastleGateshead distinctive?

Physical features of NewcastleGateshead

The valley topography of NewcastleGateshead and the River Tyne corridor were distinctive physical features of the twin cities. Crossing the river by train “feels really special”, but the bridges are also a source of frustration and an impediment to crossing the river as a pedestrian.

The proximity and accessibility from the city centre(s) of both rural and coastal environments and the walk-ability of the City Centre from the inner suburbs makes NewcastleGateshead a convenient and enjoyable place to live, as do lower property prices (compared with other English cities). The Metro light-rail network was highlighted positively for blurring the boundaries of the city, making the coast easily accessible, and linking the centres of Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland.

Social features of NewcastleGateshead

The participants' comments were primarily directed at the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, rather than addressed to both cities of NewcastleGateshead. Around 50% more comments are positive than negative, although there were ambivalent attitudes expressed. Especially about gatherings of large crowds of football spectators, which can seem exclusive and even intimidating to those not involved. Newcastle upon Tyne is marketed using its reputation as a 'party city'. The prevalence of a "drinking culture", as an integral component of the 'nightlife' economy in Newcastle, was also viewed ambivalently. Both male and female participants expressed the feeling that it was safe to be in the city at night, although one participant recounting experiences walking home after working in a bar, described the night-time city as "safe, but weird". The perception that Newcastle is a safe city was attributed to its scale. The Newcastle conurbation has a population of approximately 300,000 people (the population of the Gateshead conurbation adds around another 200,000 people). There was a presumption that people would offer help to you if asked. The scale of the city was also considered good for networking and developing a career in the arts as the people who you meet would remember who you are.

What is missing?

This question had not been addressed explicitly in any of the mappings (it is difficult to represent an absence) so was re-stated in the discussion.

Although "city-ness" was defined as culturally diverse, this diversity was perceived to operate within limits and specific ranges, especially related to age. It was noted that a lot of families live in the inner suburbs of NewcastleGateshead, but rarely in the city centres. Two of the participants described themselves as "city girl[s]", although one had moved out of the city centre to the coast and another wanted to live in the countryside, but still within a 10 minutes travel radius of the city centre. They did not identify with their perceptions of their imagined, future neighbours, "where am I gonna move to? ___ with all the old people, I want to be with all the kids! I need to find like a magical street in the countryside that's just young professionals living [there]".

The participants also felt that party politics played an important part in the historic and current identities of the cities. "People do feel hard done by in the way we get forgotten about." However, local politicians and councillors were also considered ineffective, "when investment is made in the North, it's always [in] Manchester or Leeds..."

Workshop 2: Methodology

As in the precursor “Mapping the City” project (Messer, Jeffries, Swords, 2017) we borrowed the method of emergent thematic analysis described by Liz Taylor (2009) and Tine Béneker et al. (2010: p. 128) in adapting the work of anthropologists John Collier Jr. and Malcolm Collier from their photo-essay and elicitation projects.

In “Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method” (pp. 178-179) Collier proposes a four-stage ‘basic model for analysis’:

First stage: observe the data as a whole, noting the impressions and all questions brought to mind;

Second stage: inventory the evidence for its general content, structure the inventory and the context and categories of the research goals;

Third stage: analysis of the evidence with reference to the specific questions and detailed descriptions for comparison;

Fourth stage: return to the complete data set and review for significance of the details to re-establish the full context.

In the method as described by Béneker et al. (2010) the fourth stage was not replicated. Whereas Collier created many detailed categories in the second stage, and was initially unable to establish any hierarchy to his observations, Béneker et al. identified only a limited number of three/ four broad themes and then, in stage 3, expanded on their detailed observations under those headings. We also adopted the latter, three stage approach.

Analysis of the mappings

In Workshop 2, the participants were re-presented with the mappings they, and their peers, had made in workshop 1. The participants were guided through Stages 1 & 2 of Collier’s ‘basic model for analysis’ (detailed above). For the emergent thematic analysis, the participants were asked to think about ‘*their* city’ and what it meant to them personally when they were reviewing, (re)interpreting and prioritising the mappings. We did not draw a distinction between the mappings of generic ‘city-ness’ and of Newcastle-Gateshead. Workshop 3 used Stage 3 of the ‘basic model for analysis’ to begin discussing tactics for change and for reinforcing positive observations.

Findings

An initial twelve motifs were identified by the participants in the first stage analysis of the mappings. These were combined and reduced through directed discussion, eventually identifying four overarching themes:

#1. Uses of space; described the cultural uses of the cities of NewcastleGateshead, encompassing performing and visual arts (referred to by the participants as “culture”) and “nightlife”. “Culture” and “nightlife” were considered distinct but, at least partially, co-dependent. This theme also included the diversity of types of foodstuffs available and places to eat and, more broadly, places of consumerism.

#2. Character of people; addressed the positive and negative perceptions and stereotypes of the people in the North-East; their reputation for friendliness – the perception of “friendliness” being ascribed, by ‘others’, to the local accent(s) was also noted by the participants – as well as “grittiness” (perseverance) and stoicism. Negative associations, such as the “sibling” rivalries between Newcastle and Gateshead and between Newcastle and Sunderland - which “come from a place of meanness” - were also highlighted, as were negative associations of class, poverty and lack of education if you had not “lost” your accent.

#3. Being connected; considered the allegorical understanding of the environment, with the weather, specifically rain, and the multitude of bridges being anthropomorphised to represent the characteristics of the peoples identified in theme #2, e.g. emotional resilience and stoicism were equated to structural/ physical strength and endurance. This theme also incorporated the iconography of place for the participants. For example, feeling that one has returned or arrived at home when you first see Antony Gormley’s ‘Angel of the North’ sculpture while travelling northwards on the A1 road or crossing the River Tyne on the High Level Bridge by train on the East Coast Mainline.

#4. Where we’ve come from; concerned both the physical and intangible heritages of the region. This engendered a discussion about the loss of community identities associated with work and geographical communities centred on heavy industries; the expansion and intrusion of service sector work beyond a traditional 9 AM to 5 PM working day, and more generally, the precarity of the low-wage and zero-hour contract employment, and pseudo-self-employed “gig” economy. These were contrasted with the opportunities in the region afforded by the expansion in higher education, technology and digital businesses and in research, especially in life-sciences. However, it was felt those working in the arts had not benefitted from strategic investment and employment opportunities or financially to the same degree as those employed in the sciences.

All four themes identified in workshop two suggested positive, negative and ambivalent attributes to the city for the participants.

Comparison of the coding of the Workshop 1 discussion and participants’ visual analysis in Workshop 2

As noted, the participants were asked slightly different questions in Workshop 1 & 2. Consequently, the four themes, detailed above, which derived from the emergent thematic analysis of the mappings are more discursive and overlapping than the author’s pre-planned structuring of the discussion in Workshop 1 and its subsequent coding. It is interesting to note how certain words are re-interpreted by the participants to take on different nuances in Workshop 2 from how they were first employed during the discussion in Workshop 1. For example, from the transcript of Workshop 1, “friendliness” was associated with individuals feeling safer in Newcastle, especially at night, compared with their experiences in other cities (Hull and London). During the visual analysis, “friendliness” was discussed in relation to positive and negative associations to accent and defining regional characteristics – the willingness not to take oneself too seriously; and a willingness to intervene to assist a stranger in distress. Topography and geographical features were used specifically to describe the physical attributes of Newcastle-Gateshead in Workshop 1. In Workshop 2 they

were interpreted entirely as allegorical or in personal iconography, for example, marking a sense of arrival or return (#3. Being Connected).

Workshop 3 : Reinterpretation and Propositions

In Workshop 3, we began to discuss how the participants might promote the positive attributes and address the negative attributes their emergent thematic analysis had raised. One group of three participants chose to consider theme **#2. Character of people**. A second group (two participants, plus the author) discussed theme **#4. Where we've come from**.

Many of the issues the analysis suggested are complex and the problems inter-related. Initially those issues appeared insurmountable to the participants; that they could only be tackled by institutionally-led, 'top down' approaches or even legislation. However, it was also agreed the 'top down' approach has often resulted in tokenistic and 'tick-box' solutionism. While expressing frustration initially, personal experiences were cited to identify potential campaigns and projects that could, nevertheless, have some sort of impact; even if this was 'just' to raise awareness of the issue rather than to offer a solution or enact a change to the circumstances creating the issue in the first place.

The value placed on an individual's work, in both retail and the arts, was discussed and compared with the perceptions of the 'worth' of a science or engineering degree or kudos attached to working in these fields. A simple, graphic devise to make this visible was considered; in retail, for example, this could be a badge that displays the hourly rates paid by their equivalent in the product made or sold, and the employee's productivity, i.e. paid (the equivalent of) X cups of coffee per hour to serve Y cups of coffee per hour.

Access to 'culture' and the arts was of concern to the participants discussing theme #4 as the main focus of the Team Juice community identity. The place(s) in which art took place and were presented, and the diversity of artists' identities were seen as major inhibitions to broader social access. There was concern that despite continuous efforts to increase the diversity of Team Juice's membership, they too had been ineffectual in addressing the causes of their criticisms of larger and mainstream 'cultural' institutions, and that this could not be challenged or addressed until it was acknowledged and discussed openly. The main problem posed for arts institutions is that they are not able to reach a broader demographic. Representation of a much greater diversity of people's experiences was thought to be key to making existing institutions seem more inclusive and relevant for people who do not currently think it is 'for them'. The idea of proposing a voluntary charter on diversity to which galleries and curators could sign-up was dismissed by the participants as both risking tokenism (and, therefore, potentially patronising and an even greater boundary to participation) and also unlikely to be effective (would those curators who do not already "stop, think, commission" be likely to sign-up to a voluntary charter on diversity of representation?). Proposing different, later opening hours was one move considered likely to have a larger impact on young people's attendances. The participants also suggested orchestrating the effect of their mass 'consumer' behaviour was considered more likely to be effective in influencing institutions. For example, art galleries might be persuaded to hold (more) late evening openings if a self-organising group guaranteed a minimum number of visitors for that evening.

Evaluation & Discussion

The following section of the paper relates the “Mapping the Future” project to two theoretical perspectives which informed it and suggests one avenue for future investigation. It concludes with the author’s reflections on the pilot project, and the extent to which the theoretical perspectives and the author’s expectations were supported and confounded by the outcome of the “Mapping the Future” workshops with Team Juice.

1. Geographical Communities vs Communities of (Shared) Interests

Team Juice participants were guided through the stages of an emergent thematic analysis process, revisiting their own and their peers’ mappings as the data source. The issues identified and the tactics discussed in the workshops tended to be social and economic rather than spatial/ locational or architectural/ physical. The author’s conjecture is this was, at least in part, a consequence of the group’s composition – as the participants belonged to a community based primarily on shared interests rather than geographical proximity or other cultural bonds out with their involvement in Team Juice and the arts. Workshops with different types of communities may reflect different emphases or demonstrate different priorities. For the next iteration of the project, working with different youth organisation(s), the author intends to consider the nature of the participants’ community ties more overtly.

Future workshops could also consider how the hypothetical tactics developed could then become implemented operationally by the participant(s) and/ or their community:

- Who/ what do we want to change/ affect?
- Who do we need to influence?
- Will they be responsive or resistant to our objective?
- What are their motivations?
- How many of us are needed?
- Do any organisations/ structures exist already that we can join/ use to achieve our objective?
- What are the risks and/ or costs ...to them? ...to us?

2. Changing attitudes

For architecture students, their formal, studio-based education is geared towards acquiring an intuitive approach to problem-solving through iteration and praxis (see, for example, Tucker, 2008). With continuous feedback in studio-based tutorials and staged reviews, students develop a reflective practice and cultivate their tacit knowledge, building up a mental library of precedents and empirical experience. As they gain confidence through practicing the design process they are asked to respond to more complex (and ‘wicked’) problems and eventually to identify these for themselves. This intensive and sustained education produces an epistemological shift. A shift from experiencing the built environment as seemingly permanent to viewing it as being, at least latently, malleable, even though the vast majority of what they produce, does not and never will, exist beyond its representation on paper, screen or as a maquette.

For participants in the “Mapping the Future” workshops to bridge that epistemological ‘gap’ - from their lived experiences of the city, recorded in the first workshop, to then speculate about how the city could be more responsive and inclusive of their expectations or un-met needs in the third workshop – requires the development of another way of conceptualising the city, but one which is not a pastiche of professional training.

Currently this attitudinal change is only hypothecated. The author would like to find or develop a method to track if a change in perception and/ or mind-set actually is occurring for the workshop participants. The following section outlines one approach which the author hopes will be able to build that epistemological bridge in future workshops.

A Design Fiction approach

This approach emerged in the inter-disciplinary field of Human-Computer Interfaces (H.C.I.). Design Fiction is used here as an umbrella term to describe two intersecting concepts:

- Proposing an intervention, rather than a solution, to a contemporary ‘problem’
- Creating a near future scenario in which to observe how ‘users’ would interact

There are numerous similar names for those approach(es) such as ‘Speculative Design’ and ‘Critical Design’, each denoting slightly differing nuances. In this instance, the term Design Fiction is preferred because it is sufficiently conceptually, and etymologically, similar to Science Fiction. It sounds immediately familiar, rather than complex or intimidating, while still implying something speculative or propositional. Unlike the technical language and representational conventions of architecture and built environment professionals for instance, the written and visual language of Science Fiction is accessible to a broad cross-section of the population through novels, television and, particularly, cinema. Science Fiction also provides examples of Design Fiction. One example was the communicator in the Star Trek TV series (1966-69) famously inspired Motorola’s ‘clamshell’ design for the 1996 StarTAC mobile telephone. In Design Fiction the designer’s objective is to observe *how* ‘users’ interact [with a ‘technology’ – defined in the broadest sense as man-made], not to design a particular product or solution. While that technology may not actually ‘function’ [yet, or ever], the scenario has to be believable to the ‘users’ (Augers, 2013). By situating the Design Fiction in the participants’ own ‘lifeworlds’, the situations, tactics and objectives identified are grounded recognisably in their reality, albeit an exaggerated, extrapolated or ideal version of it.

Reflections

The author had anticipated that, like architecture students, the participants would arrive at speculative transformations of known spaces for new (and currently unknown) activities. In fact, the participants all addressed contemporary social situations they perceived as ‘problems’ worth solving. While these situations related to commercial and institutional spaces – *the* coffee shop or *the* art gallery – they were not about the space of *a specific* coffee shop or *a specific* art gallery. Their hypothetical propositions were, for the most part, for direct actions intervening in their [lived] space and negotiating relationships between

themselves and others. In other words, these were examples of p/political tactics in the mode described by Elwood & Mitchell (2012) and Kallio & Häkli (2013).

The disruptions they proposed – a badge; guaranteed visitor numbers for late night opening of cultural venues – would not fundamentally transform the situations they identified. The coffee shop employee, who displays to the customers what their time is deemed worth by the coffee shop chain, implicitly protests the chain's values and the customer has greater empathy for the employee who is no longer seen just as the public face of the chain. The transaction itself – purchasing a cup of coffee - is not altered. The art gallery that opens at times that suit the visitors makes the institution accessible to a wider demographic. The audience gain access to the art on their own temporal terms. However the institution is not changed and, in terms of visitor number metrics, it is validated. Mayer might therefore argue, with some justification, that these are merely accommodations, “neoliberalism with a human touch” (2009: p. 369), rather than transformational. But if, as Lefebvre observed, the ‘Right to the City’ is slow, continual, and arises only through its enactment, the value of the “Mapping the Future” pilot project was facilitating the participants to begin to change their conceptions of their agency in relation to ‘the city’.

Children's Geography emerged with an emancipatory motive – to represent a marginalised group's experiences - but this is exercised (if at all) through the researcher's papers detailing and theorising their observations, rather than direct actions and interactions with their participants. The implicit expectation that practice and research by architects will lead to a proposition for change raises different ethical considerations when we try to engage with specific groups and individuals: who instigates this and with what end goal in mind?

We need to be conscious of our inherent privileges – as adults, as professional, or as academics – when our actions put more marginalised individuals and groups on to ‘the front line’ of contesting ‘the city’. Here I would draw a distinction between methods and tactics. Methods enable the situation to be identified and articulated, but do not specify how these are to be addressed. The situations identified, and the tactics they develop – which may include doing nothing at all - are devised by the communities themselves, not the researcher-facilitator.

There are a multitude of everyday examples of spatial p/politics enacted by young people exercising agency and contesting the use value of space(s). From ‘hanging out’ in more youth-friendly environments such as cinema lobbies, through (re)claiming space from adults by playing music, to finding new affordances in street furniture and the spaces between buildings for skateboarding or free-running, and even physically altering spaces, by making ramps for ‘BMXing’ for example. Facilitating more young people to express dissatisfactions, to communicate their spatial needs and desires, and contesting the use-values of ‘the city’, should result in a more lively and inclusive environment for all.

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